



# Media release

The Place To Be

From the Minister for State and Regional Development

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Monday, 13 March 2006

## **\$330,000 FOR HALLS GAP TOURISM AND TOWN INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Minister for State and Regional Development, John Brumby, today announced a planned upgrade to redevelop the Halls Gap town centre and construction of new tourism infrastructure had been brought forward in a bid to renew confidence following the devastating bushfires earlier this year.

In Halls Gap today to launch the Bracks Government's Bushfire Ministerial Taskforce final report and \$10.8 million recovery package, Mr Brumby said the \$330,000 *Small Towns Development Fund* grant to Northern Grampians Shire would also help restore confidence in the town.

"The Government is doing all it can to help support fire affected communities and these projects will improve tourism infrastructure in Halls Gap and provide an immediate economic boost that sends a message that the town is very much open for business," Mr Brumby said.

"Redeveloping the town centre includes implementing stage two of the Halls Gap Urban Design Framework with new paving extensions, kerbing in natural stone, and the development of new public shelters, eating and outdoor recreation areas for residents and visitors to the CBD."

Member for Ripon, Joe Helper, said the funding would also allow the start of stage one of the Halls Gap Community and Tourism Hub.

"Upgrades to the existing Visitor Information Centre and visitor facilities to help the town cope with two million visitors each year," Mr Helper said.

"Supporting tourism projects and infrastructure in Halls Gap is vital because tourism has been badly hit by the bushfires, and it is worth \$211 million in this region each year."

The Government is providing \$250,000 toward stage one of the \$375,000 Halls Gap Community and Tourism Hub, and \$80,000 out of the \$120,000 total project cost for stage two of the Halls Gap Urban Design Framework, with the Council providing the rest.

Mr Brumby said the Halls Gap projects were an important part of Government's overall \$10.8 million recovery package for Victorian communities affected by the January 2006 bushfires.

Other features of the Bracks Government's \$10.8 recovery package include:

- **\$3 million** to assist farmers and rural landholders with business recovery, pest control, soil erosion and the de-silting of dams;
- **\$2.2 million** for a range of initiatives to rejuvenate the natural and built environment including:
  - rebuilding walking trails in the Grampians to reactivate tourism, the continuing engagement of summer fire crews until April to rebuild trails, with priority given to "iconic" trails to enable them to open before Easter;

**Media contact: Campbel Giles 9651 5799 or 0407 972 900 [www.vic.gov.au](http://www.vic.gov.au)**

- boosting the State's fire mapping capacity to assist Parks Victoria with assessing the extent of fire damage;
- measures to assess and protect cultural works; and
- repairs to damaged water authority works.
- **\$1.6 million** in new tourism industry support, including a marketing and advertising campaign to help bring people back to the bushfire affected areas;
- **\$300,000** for Ararat, Northern Grampians, Southern Grampians shires and the Rural City of Horsham for community development initiatives;
- **\$135,000** for small-scale community projects across all the fire-affected areas;
- and **seven** community infrastructure projects brought forward under the Government's *Small Towns Development Fund (STDF)*, in Ararat, Halls Gap, Rawson, Walhalla, and Yea.